

HOTTEST SPOT: GØTA, LEIRVÍK TO WELCOME MORE VISITORS

Eysturkommuna

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Mayor: Jóhan Christiansen

Eysturkommuna ('East Municipality') comprises the villages of Gøta — Norðragøta, Við Gøtugjógv, Syðrugøta, Undir Gøtueiði — and Leirvík, with a total population of 2022.

Eysturkommuna is home to a vibrant business and cultural community, and to some of the Faroe Islands' oldest settlements. Some of the country's leading fishing and seafood businesses are based in Gøta and Leirvík. The municipality is centrally located in the Faroe Islands and well connected with an excellent road infrastructure, including a mountain tunnel between Norðragøta and Leirvík and an underwater tunnel between Leirvík and Klaksvík.

The music scene here has won wide acclaim, with numerous successful music artists emerging in recent years. The G! Festival, an internationally renowned music festival held at the beach of Syðrugøta, attracts thousands of visitors each summer.

Norðragøta, believed to have been the place of residence for famed chieftain Tróndur of Gøta, traces its origins as far back as to 630 AD. According to archeological estimates, Leirvík has been inhabited for about 1200 years.

Museums:

- Blásastova Museum and the Farm of Tróndur of Gøta, near the Old Church, Norðragøta.
- Lista- og Bátasavnið (Museum of Art and Boats), near the fishing harbor in Leirvík.

Eysturkommuna, the municipality of Gøta and Leirvík, has much to offer beyond the G! Festival and ancient chieftains, and is preparing a new effort to streamline its policies on local development, business, tourism, culture and more.

ONE of the proudest and most independent communities in the Faroe Islands is that of the neighboring villages of Gøta and Leirvík, also known as the municipality of Eysturkommuna. Located on the island of Eysturoy, roughly between Runavík and Fuglafjørður, Gøta and Leirvík are originally old settlements dating back some 1,200 years to Viking times and farther.

However, rather than their ancient histories, these communities are more widely known as the home of culturally modern and confident people. It seems as if the spirit of Tróndur of Gøta, the Viking chieftain and ruler of an independent Faroe Islands back in the day, lives on to infuse the place with a fierce sense of self determination.

"We are currently considering ways to help better accommodate incoming tourism," said mayor Jóhan Christiansen. "I'd say the possibilities are endless but at the same time, the Municipal Council is not seeking direct involvement and we prefer to let the community itself—that is, local people and businesses—take the lead in that respect. The role of the Council is rather to facilitate development to the extent deemed advisable. Of course, that may involve some investment from time to time, in areas of strictly general interest for the municipality; but again, it depends on whatever the Council may decide."

According to the mayor, the Municipal Council's Board of Commerce and Industry

is currently working on a policy recommendation that considers development in several departments.

"The Board of Commerce and Industry has just about completed its policy proposal," according to Friði B. Nielsen, the Municipal Council's coordinator on business and tourism.

"It might surprise some but as a matter of fact we have a good deal of business activities beyond the seafood trade. We have a very central, advantageous location and there is plenty of growth opportunities, some of which, but not all, are related to tourism. For example, we have allocated 15,000 square meters of commercial/industrial area near the Gøta-Leirvík Tunnel and another one at the harbor of Leirvík, with about half of the available acreage about to be sold to businesses."

Some of the leading companies of the Faroe Islands are based off Eysturkommuna or have their roots there, such as Gøta-based pelagic fishing industry major Varðin and Gøta-linked salmon producer HiddenFjord. Other well-known entities in the seafood trade include Leirvík's Tavan, Fofish-Norðfra, and Faroe Marine Products, to name some.

'EXCEPTIONAL'

Road infrastructure has seen remarkable development within Eysturkommuna in re-



OLAVUR FREDRIKSEN — FAROE PHOTO



EYSTURKOMMUNA



MARIA OLSEN

Mayor Jóhan Christiansen; Leirvík's fishing harbour (bottom left); Partial view of Blásastova, Norðragøta (bottom right); Scene from the G! Festival (opposite left); Drone photo of Gøta with Syðrugøta in the foreground (opposite right).

cent years, most notably with the opening in 2006 of the Norðoyatunnilin, the Leirvík-Klaksvík underwater tunnel. In connection with the current construction of a new underwater tunnel between Tórshavn and Eysturoy, a mountain tunnel between Gøta and Skálabotn is in the pipeline, to reduce travel time between the Klaksvík-Fuglafjørður-Leirvík-Gøta region and Strendur, one of the three-legged ends of the new underwater tunnel.

"This municipality is likely to become more centrally located than ever," Mr. Christiansen noted. "With the

growing traffic and increasing number of visitors we can expect, both domestic and foreign, I'd say we're likely to see more services added sooner rather than later."

As for tourism, existing offerings range from the G! Festival to mountain hiking, to Norðragøta's Blásastova Museum and the Farm of Tróndur of Gøta next door, to Leirvík's Lista- og Bátasavnið (Museum of Art and Boats); however, there is still more to come.

One of the latest additions to cultural offerings is a home-based entertainment event developed by Jón Tyril,

one of the founders of several music related projects including Grót, Hoyma, and the G! Festival. As per his description, HOYMAbit is a "truly unique and ultimate way to experience Faroese music and culture." The idea: to offer exclusive home concerts with leading Faroese artists set in actual homes with homemade food tasters from local produce, an experience that combines authentic Faroese music, food, hospitality and socializing.

Eysturkommuna is widely recognized as a cradle of creativity, not least in popular and indie music, producing the likes of singer-songwriter Eivør of international fame, plus many more, including music artist Høgni Lisberg. The acclaimed G! Festival, held at the Syðrugøta beach every summer since 2002, attracts music fans and partygoers from all over the world—"A truly exceptional festival experience in a location unlike any other," to quote the 'Kerrang!' rock music magazine.



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BLÁSASTOVA GÖTU FORNMINNISAVN